



What to expect pre and post Hernia Surgery

Thanks to our new safe surgical technique, hernia surgery is efficient and usually pain-free in the recovery period.

What happens on the day of your hernia surgery?

When you have an appointment for hernia surgery at the Hernia Clinic Hampshire, your procedure typically follows these steps:

- Arrive at our clinic on the day of surgery. You'll have had a pre-assessment sometime before and, depending on the results of a skin swab taken at that pre-assessment, may need to wash with a special shower gel for two days prior to surgery.
- Don't eat or drink anything for six hours prior to arriving at hospital for surgery
- Take your medicines as normal, except for any medicines you're specifically asked not to take at the pre-assessment.
- On arrival, you'll be met by reception staff who will take you to your room where there'll be a bed in a private room waiting. Nursing staff will run through the final paperwork and checks and help you change into a gown, dressing gown and TED compression stockings.
- A member of the surgical team will come and see you to go through the final bits of paperwork and confirm the plans for the day. They'll also mark up the side of your body to be repaired.
- When you are ready you'll then be taken down to theatre to meet the operating room staff and anaesthetist, who will insert a cannula into a vein in your arm or hand and make sure you're feeling comfortable.
- Once you're ready, the surgeon arrives to administer the local anaesthetic. While it gets to work, the anaesthetist will check you're comfortable and relaxed on the bed.
- During this time we'll shave the operative area (if needed), prepare the area with antiseptic wash and arrange some drapes.
- Your surgeon will check you can't feel anything in the area of the operation, then starts the operation, which takes between 35 and 50 minutes.
- Once surgery is complete, you're taken out to the recovery area, where you'll be for 15-20 minutes while observations are carried out.
- A nurse will check to make sure you're comfortable and happy, then you'll return to your private room, where you'll be given something to eat and drink and you can get dressed.
- We usually wait for you to pass water before we discharge you, which can be two to three hours after surgery has ended.



- The surgery and trips to and from theatre can take an hour or so, and you may be in your room for a few hours from arrival before going down to theatre.
- Outside of covid restrictions you are welcome to bring a friend or family member with you who can be with you in your room pre and post surgery.
- You will need to arrange to have someone pick you up after surgery as you cannot drive. You will also need someone with you overnight post surgery or if preferred you have the option to stay overnight in hospital.

Recovery and recuperation from a hernia operation under local anaesthetic

By having your hernia surgery under local anaesthetic we are blocking the body's ability to know that you have had an operation. This minimises the body's reaction to the operation, which under general anaesthetic manifests as pain, stiffness and feeling unwell. It is expected that with simple pain relief medication you will remain comfortable.

Bruising

The length of time you will need to take simple pain relief is related to the amount of bruising. Local anaesthetic repairs have a quick recovery time.

No matter how large the bruise, some simple pain relief and waiting up to a few weeks will fix it.

Bruising is complicated. There are a lot of factors that influence the extent of bruising, including:

- Size and complexity of the hernia
- How the hernia is repaired – open or keyhole
- Being overweight
- Medical conditions that affect bone marrow and tissue healing
- Regular blood-thinning medication
- Age and general frailty

Wound dressings

We nearly always advise to leave the wound alone and wait for it to heal by itself over time. This is approximately 12 days.

You will have three layers of dressing.



Bottom layer:

The bottom layer (layer one) of butterfly sutures needs to stay on for 12 days.

Middle layer:

The middle layer (layer two) is a flat waterproof dressing. You can shower with it on and then pat it dry. It may last 12 days but you might need to change it once or twice. The fewer times it is changed the better as it reduces the risk of a minor wound infection.

Top layer:

The top layer (layer three) is called a pressure dressing and is there to apply firm pressure to the wound to reduce bruising. We try and leave this in place for 48 hours. You can take it off at home, but leave the two dressing layers beneath it in place.

The skin edges are closed with a suture that is invisible under the skin, so there are no sutures to see – if you can feel an end it will disappear in a few weeks.

At 12 days, you can remove all the dressings and the wound should be healed: dry and clean. Simply washing it with a wet flannel at this stage will remove any last clots

Pain relief

The best way to manage pain relief is to take it before any pain develops or becomes present enough to reduce your mobility or makes you feel unwell. If you don't actively try to control the pain, hernia surgery can be painful.

If you do actively manage it then recovery from hernia surgery should be reasonably straightforward.

To maximise your post surgery comfort and recovery we advise that before the anaesthetic wears off you start taking the paracetamol and ibuprofen prescribed to you on your discharge before leaving hospital.

It is common with any open hernia surgery to feel a numb patch or area of altered sensation about the size of a 50p piece around the region of the scar. Patients can expect this to fade slowly overtime. This can take up to six months and for a few this sensation can be permanent.

Paracetamol

Take two paracetamol capsules regularly four times a day. This medicine has few/no side effects and is safe in nearly everyone.

Ibuprofen

Take two ibuprofen capsules, regularly to start with, three times a day. Always take them with food. Some patients can experience problems with this medicine as it can



cause stomach irritation and affect kidney function. However, taking it for 72 hours with food should be safe and it is a very effective painkiller, especially when taken with paracetamol.

Dihydrocodeine

This is a powerful opioid painkiller with a long list of side effects. Only take it if needed. You can take it up to four times a day with the paracetamol and ibuprofen as instructed above. It can cause constipation, nausea, poor appetite, headaches, drowsiness and affect concentration. You should not operate machinery while taking this and you may need a laxative with it. We will send you home with one.

Mobility and returning to day-to-day activity

The other significant factor involved in recovery is mobility. Early mobilisation after surgery is key – particularly with the older generation. Being still will only worsen stiffness and soreness making your recovery longer and more painful. Keep moving.

There are no limitations on returning to activity as long as you follow this rule: If it hurts (more than just being a bit uncomfortable) stop doing it and try again tomorrow.

For driving the DVLA states that you must be able to do an emergency stop. It is illegal to drive a car if you cannot do this. Some insurers have time limits in the small print of their contracts so it can be worth calling them to make sure you are covered to drive again. On average after hernia surgery expect not to drive for 10 days.

You can shower or wash at a basin from day one. To have a bath or swim the wound needs to be healed and dry (typically after 12 days).

Most people can walk a mile and carry a small bag of shopping within a week.

Sport enthusiasts should return to exercise carefully 14 days after surgery. It is best to try aerobic exercise, such as running, swimming and exercise classes first and for a smaller distance or duration than you usually managed. Build it up again as comfort allows.

Cycling can be uncomfortable for several weeks.

Expect it to take at least 4 weeks to lift weights in the gym. If lifting weights start with light weights that are comfortable and increase the number of repetitions before lifting heavy weights at a low repetition. In short, try and use common sense and follow the first rule stated above.



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Follow Up

You will have a follow up after 4-6 weeks once recovered.

If you need to be seen before this then please contact us, or the hospital you were treated at if urgent, to arrange an earlier review. If you have other questions in the meantime please contact us and we will get back to you asap.

As a private patient of the Hernia Clinic Hampshire you are in the best possible care but it is ultimately up to you as to how much you follow our post surgery advice and information.

All the information you need to make an informed choice about hernia surgery is within this 'Hernia Surgery' section of our website and is part of the consenting process.

If after reading this a couple of times you still have questions please email them to us prior to your surgery so we can answer them and make sure you are comfortable with and understand what you are agreeing to and why.

We will go through a consent form and both sign what we have agreed to on the day of surgery, but you must not leave it to the day of surgery to feel informed about your decision. If you decide against surgery you need to appreciate the consequences of that decision too.